

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 RIYADH 00125 201457Z
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----103094 201458Z /43
O R 201335Z FEB 78 ZFF-4
FM USLO RIYADH
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 328
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

S E C R E T RIYADH 125

EXDIS HANDLE AS NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, ET, SO, SA
SUBJECT: HORN OF AFRICA

REF STATE 44005

1. SUMMARY. THE POSITION OF THE FIVE WESTERN FOREIGN MINISTERS ON THE HORN OF AFRICA WAS DELIVERED TO CROWN PRINCE FAHD TODAY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE INSTRUCTIONS RECEIVED IN REFTELS. DURING THE COURSE OF THE DISCUSSION TWO POINTS EMERGED WHICH ARE CENTRAL TO THE SAUDI POSITION: FIRST, THE WILL NOT RECOMMEND TO PRESIDENT BARRE THAT HE MAKE A UNILATERAL WITHDRAWAL OF SOMALIA FORCES FROM THE OGADEN; SECOND, AFTER SOME DISCUSSION PRINCE FAHD STATED HIS WILLINGNESS TO CONCEDE THAT IF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL SO FINDS, THEN SOMALIA WILL HAVE TO RETURN THE OGADEN TO ETHIOPIA. FAHD FELT IT IMPERATIVE THAT WE FIND A MEANS OF SAVING FACE FOR BARRE AND SUGGESTED THAT THE WAY TO ACCOMPLISH THIS WAS TO HAVE UN FORCES TAKE THE PLACE OF SOMALIA FORCES UNDER A UN-ARRANGED CEASE FIRE IN THE OGADEN. IN PURSUING THIS, HE AGREED TO RECOMMEND TO PRESIDENT BARRE THAT AN ANNOUNCEMENT BE MADE BY BARRE INDICATING HIS WILLINGNESS TO WITHDRAW FROM THE OGADEN ON THE BASIS OF A UN SECURITY COUNCIL DECISION. END SUMMARY.

2. ALONG WITH TWO EMBASSY OFFICERS, I MET WITH CROWN PRINCE FAHD

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TODAY TO DELIVER THE U.S. POSITION AS SET FORTH IN REFTELS. WE DELIVERED A COPY OF THE U.S. POSITION IN BOTH ARABIC AND ENGLISH.

3. WE WERE INFORMED THAT THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR HAD DELIVERED THE U.K.'S POSITION ON YESTERDAY. THEREFORE WE PRESUMED THAT FAHD WAS GENERALLY FAMILIAR WITH THE CONTENTS OF OUR POSITION. FAHD'S IMMEDIATE REACTION WAS EXTREMELY NEGATIVE; HE ASKED IF A WITH-

DRAWAL WOULD MEAN THAT THE OGADEN AREA WOULD BE OCCUPIED BY ETHIOPIA AND CUBAN TROOPS. I REPLIED THAT OF COURSE WE COULD NOT SAY POSITIVELY BUT WE WOULD HAVE TO ASSUME THAT SUCH WOULD PROBABLY BE THE CASE. HE THEN STATED THAT IF THIS WERE THE RESULT OF A UNILATERAL WITHDRAWAL, THEN TWO THINGS WOULD HAPPEN AND HE WANTED TO MAKE HIS PREDICTION A MATTER OF RECORD: (A) THAT THERE WOULD BE MANY REPRISALS WITH MANY OGADEN RESIDENTS MASSACRED AND (B) THAT PRESIDENT BARRE WOULD BE OVERTHROWN. HE STATED THAT THERE WERE MANY ELEMENTS WAITING IN THE WINGS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF A BARRE SETBACK. HE THEN OBSERVED THAT AFTER THE OCCURRENCE OF THESE EVENTS, THERE WOULD BE NO QUESTION OF NEGOTIATING A SETTLEMENT; THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD SIMPLY TELL THEIR PUPPET REGIMES IN ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA WHAT THE SETTLEMENT WOULD BE.

4. FAHD THEN COMMENTED AT LENGTH ON THE OVERALL EFFECT OF A SOMALIA DEFEAT AND A BARRE OVERTHROW ON THE ARAB STATES AND THE HORN OF AFRICA. HE SAID THAT ANY FUTURE ATTEMPTS BY ANTICOMMUNISTS FORCES TO OUST SOVIET-DOMINATED REGIMES WOULD PROBABLY FAIL BECAUSE SOMALIA COULD BE POINTED TO AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE USELESSNESS AND FUTILITY OF SUCH AN ATTEMPT.

5. WE EMPHASIZED REPEATEDLY DURING THE COURSE OF THE MEETING THAT WE UNDERSTOOD AND WERE NOT IN DISAGREEMENT WITH THE POINTS THAT HE WAS MAKING; HOWEVER, THE MILITARY SITUATION WAS OF SUCH A CRITICAL NATURE THAT THE ONLY ALTERNATIVES PRESENTED WERE A VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL OR A CRUSHING MILITARY DEFEAT. FAHD REPLIED THAT DEATH
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WHILE DEFENDING ONE'S HOME AND PERSON WAS PREFERABLE TO DEATH BY OCCUPIED FORCES; THAT THE OGADEN RESIDENTS, MOST OF WHOM WERE SOMALIAS, WERE FIERCE FIGHTERS WHO LITERALLY WOULD FIGHT TO THE DEATH IN PREFERENCE TO THE ALTERNATIVE AS THEY SAW IT.

6. FAHD AGAIN REITERATED THE MINIMUM CONDITIONS ON WHICH SAG COULD RECOMMEND TO BARRE A WITHDRAWAL AND THIS INCLUDED THE SUBSTITUTION OF UN FORCES FOR SOMALIA TROOPS WITH AN IN-PLACE CEASE FIRE ARRANGEMENT BY THE UN.

7. WE POINTED OUT THAT SUCH MIGHT NOT BE POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF A SOVIET VETO AND HE SEEMED TO RECOGNIZE THE VALIDITY OF THAT POINT. WE THEN SUGGESTED THAT HE CONSIDER RECOMMENDING TO BARRE THE MAKING OF A PUBLIC STATEMENT IN WHICH BARRE EXPRESSED A WILLINGNESS TO WITHDRAW UNDER THE CONDITIONS SET FORTH IN REFTELS PLUS THE SUBSTITUTION OF A UN PEACE-KEEPING FORCES FOR SOMALIA TROOPS. FAHD SAID THAT HE WOULD BE GLAD TO MAKE THAT RECOMMENDATION.

8. AS A FINAL NOTE, FAHD SAID THAT IF UN INTERVENTION FAILS OR IS IMPRACTICAL FOR OTHER REASONS, THEN THE UNITED STATES MUST SHOULDER ITS RESPONSIBILITIES IF WE ARE TO AVERT A DISASTER IN SOMALIA. THE ARABS, NEITHER SINGULARLY OR COLLECTIVELY, HAVE THE WHEREWITHAL

TO EFFECTIVELY COUNTER THE SUPPORTT THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS ARE
SUPPLYING TO ETHIOPIA.

9. THE MEETING LASTED APPROXIMATELY ONE HOUR AND WAS CONCLUDED
FINALLY BY FAHD'S OBLIGATION TO ATTEND THE FUNERAL OF HIS COUSIN.
EVEN SO, HE WAS THIRTY MINUTES LATE AS HE BECAME ENGROSSED IN THE
DISCUSSION. WE TOLDE FAHD THAT WE WOULD KEEP HIM APPRISED OF ANY
FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS AND HE WAS APPRECIATIVE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DISPUTE SETTLEMENT, ARMISTICE, NEGOTIATIONS, INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING FORCES, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978RIYADH00125
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: n/a
Expiration:
Film Number: P840139-2445
Format: TEL
From: RIYADH
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780235/aaaabdno.tel
Line Count: 124
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
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Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 191361d3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: 78 STATE 44005
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 sep 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3542439
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CHANGED> MCM 20040616; <DBA CHANGED> MCM 20040616
Subject: HORN OF AFRICA
TAGS: PBOR, ET, SO, SA, UN
To: STATE JIDDA MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/191361d3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014